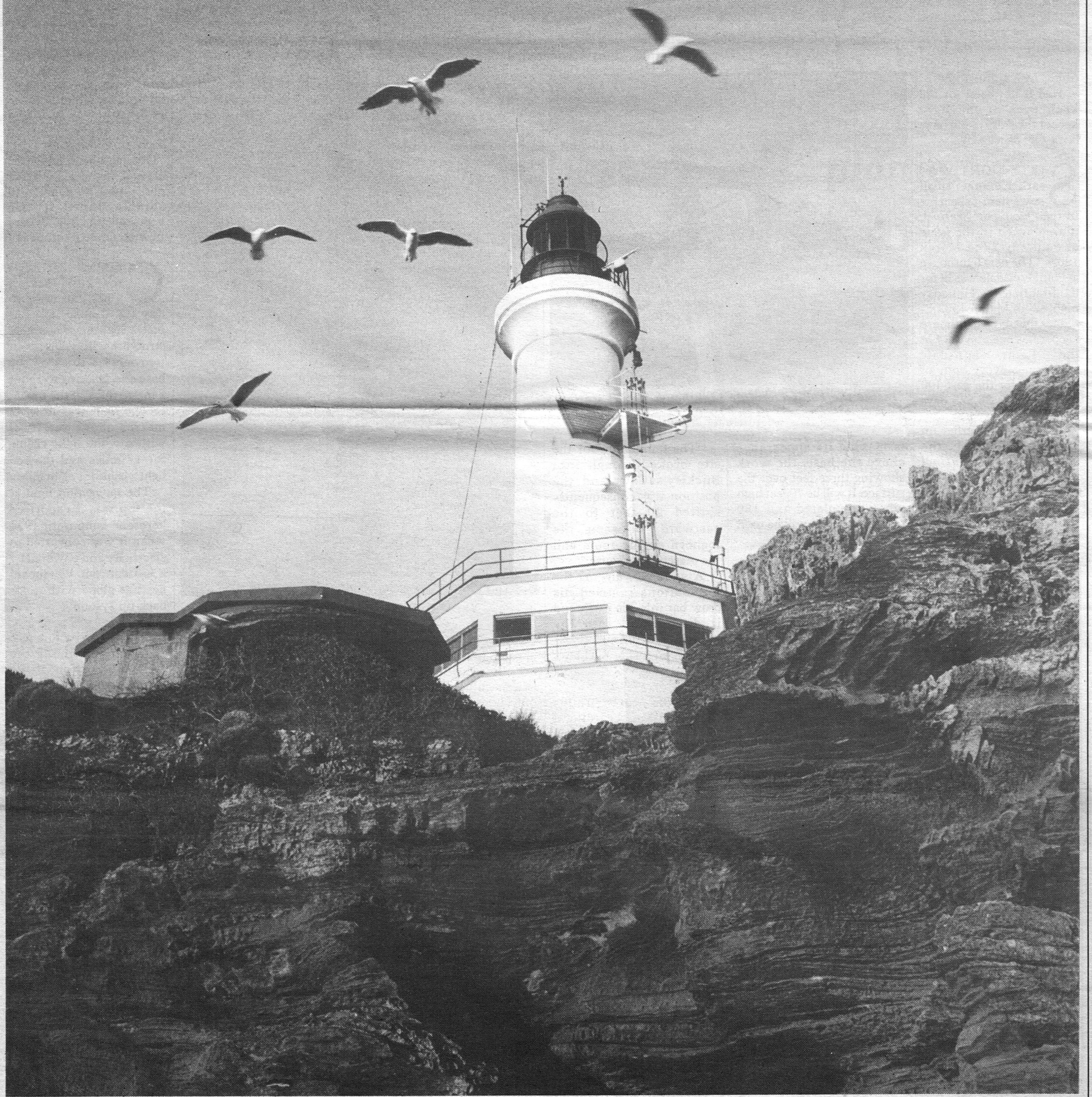


Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Centenary



PHOTOGRAPH BY RODNEY NICHOLSON

ON 9th January 1970, Melbourne newspapers carried the headline: 'Light House keeper spotted boat - two swept out to sea.'

Two young boys who had been fishing in Lonsdale Bight in a 12-foot dinghy suddenly became caught in the eight-knot ebb tide and were swept out through The Rip. The duty lighthouse keeper at Point Lonsdale spotted the boys from his observation room in the signal station of the lighthouse. He alerted the emergency services and a short time later the boys were rescued from their ordeal by a fishing boat.

Had it not been for the keen eyes of the light keeper the story could have been one of tragedy.

SIXTY-EIGHT years earlier, another small news item appearing in the *Queenscliff Sentinel*, it announced in the issue of Saturday 22nd March 1902: "The new lighthouse at Point Lonsdale was lit for the first time on Thursday night [20th March 1902]."

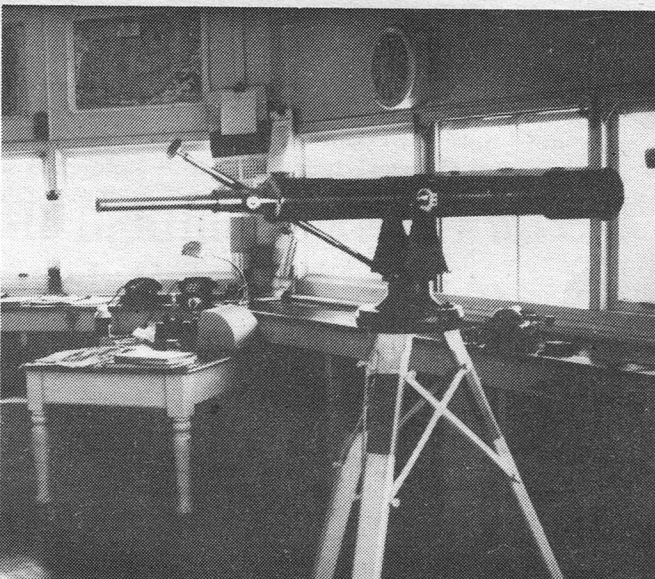
Since that day a lighthouse keeper has been on duty in the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse every hour of every day, for the past 100 years. (That's 36,525 days including leap years).

About a year earlier on 20th April 1901 the *Queenscliff Sentinel* reported progress of the construction:

"The new lighthouse at Point Lonsdale being built by George Coate for £2252.



Photograph taken in 1909 showing the new lighthouse and original timber light platform before it was dismantled.



Inside the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse signal station in the 1950s.

is making its appearance above the base, the work showing three feet over the surface. It will be 70 feet high when completed and 180 tons of concrete will be used in its construction.

"The foundation for the site broke through into Buckley's Cave and the position was consequently shifted 20 feet to the eastward, between the foghorn engine room and the present lighthouse."

A workman digging the foundations rammed his crow bar into the earth and it disappeared into the ground. The crow bar was later found inside Buckley's Cave.

IN the early 1800s discussion regarding a light at Point Lonsdale was never treated seriously until the barque *Princes Royal* was wrecked on rocks at Point Lonsdale in 1849. Inward bound from Hong Kong, the ship's master,



Point Lonsdale Lighthouse on 1920.

Captain Sinclair was apparently misled by the light on Shortland's Bluff at Queenscliff and the ship ran onto Lonsdale reef.

In his report to Lloyd's agents, Captain Sinclair claimed that the wreck was caused by the light being placed on the inner instead of the outer head (Point Lonsdale). This, he said, caused ships, unfamiliar with

the entrance, to sail into danger instead of being a guide to safety.

But while the government of the day debated whether to establish a lighthouse at Point Lonsdale or not, a retired seaman, Captain John Preston built a small house near the point in 1851 and set up a signal station which included an oil burning lantern hung from

a crossbar. He became the first Point Lonsdale Signal Station Superintendent until the first lighthouse, a timber structure, was built in 1863.

This wooden lighthouse was originally erected at Queenscliff, but it was dismantled and re-erected at Point Lonsdale at a spot about 75 metres to the north-west of the present-day lighthouse.

The timber light tower stood about 25 metres above sea level and the light had a range of about 10 nautical miles in clear weather. It was painted in alternate, three metre wide red and black bands circling the circumference of the structure. In 1883 a shed was built for a foghorn and engine.

This lighthouse, under the care of Captain Richards continued its service to shipping until it was replaced in 1902 by the new concrete lighthouse.

COMMISSIONED on 20th March 1902, the present-day lighthouse is a 21-metre high mass concrete structure with walls about two metres thick at the base and tapering to about a metre thick at the top.

The light was now 37 metres above sea level with a white light visible for 17 miles and the red light visible for eight miles.

The navigation light at the top was a vaporised kerosene lamp until 1934 when it was converted to electricity and powered by a 500 watt, 240-volt incandescent globe with a gas back-up system.

IN 1950 a structure was added encircling the lower portion of the lighthouse. This became the observation deck, shipping control room and signal station.

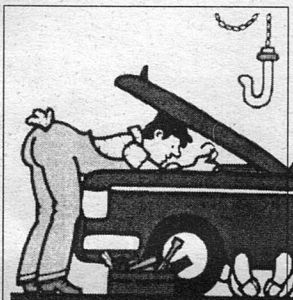
A mast was erected a short distance to the west of the lighthouse and was used to indicate tidal movements to shipping and small craft with a

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Imagine the isolation and remoteness of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse 100 years ago.

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Congratulations on a magnificent milestone.

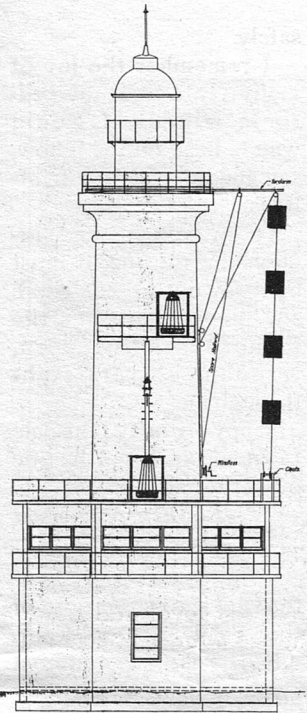
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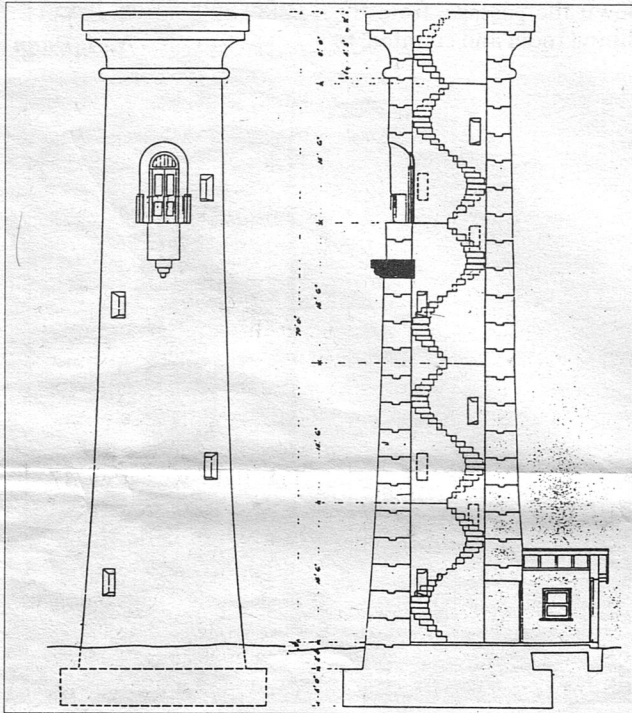
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Draftsman's drawings of 1948 for the addition of the signal station at the base of the lighthouse.



Scale drawings dated 15th January 1901 of the new lighthouse. Note the depth of the foundation.



Lighthouse keeper George Stevens

series of cone shaped, black baskets.

At night, lights on the tower indicated the tidal flow.

The signal station was equipped with radio and communications equipment as well as meteorological gear.

During a newspaper interview in 1970, a former lighthouse keeper, the late Ned Stonehouse said all personnel had to have a complete understanding of all Morse signalling either by sight or by sound, because he said much of the contact with foreign shipping is still made in this manner.

He said first contact made with ships from the signal station is often when they are many hours away from Port Phillip Heads.

During the 1970s, light keepers Jack McCleary and Tony Robinson gave an

"Both HF and VHF radio channels have to be constantly monitored. All incoming and outgoing ships must be given a clearance to both enter and leave the port and both deep draught vessels and tankers having special requirements.

"Careful observations are made of all vessels as they pass, with masters being advised at times that their ships have loose gear, anchors may be swinging dangerously or perhaps they may have mooring lines trailing over their sterns".

IN 1974 the lighthouse navigation light was converted to a 250-watt quartz iodine halogen lamp powered through a 115-volt inverter system.

In the event of a globe failure, a back-up globe is immediately moved into place. In the event of a power failure a bank of batteries automatically continues to operate the light for up to 48 hours. If further delayed, a generator can be brought into operation.

A dioptric lens (based in refraction converts the light source into a horizontal beam. Flashing occurs twice every 15 seconds.

The signal station and control room is manned 24 hours a day, every day of the year by communication officers of the Victorian Channels Authority.

They maintain a continuous visual and radio watch, as well as monitoring and advising shipping passing through Port Phillip Heads. They also provide visual and back-up to small craft.

The lighthouse also displays red sectors indicating dangerous features. On the seaward side of the lighthouse, signal lights are mounted to indicate the state of the tide and whether the port is closed to shipping. Previously this information was communicated by visual signals from the flagstaff to the west of the lighthouse.

RECENTLY the 100-year-old lighthouse moved into the high tech age with the installation of four web cameras mounted on the structure. These cameras are aimed in four different directions and are available for web browsers to take in the view from the lighthouse via www.vicchannels.vic.gov.au



The lighthouse from the back beach, circa 1948.

Lighthouse keepers

1852	Signalmaster Captain J. Preston	1941	George Ferrier.
1901	George Stevens, head keeper	1943	Albert Lee.
		1946	Don Garnham.
		1947	'Rod' Roddick
1902	A. J. Synnot appointed first lighthouse keeper of the new Lonsdale light.	1950	Colin Ferrier.
1903	Thomas McBain.	1950	Enrie Dickens
1906	Alexander Dick.	1953	Harold Stringer
1911	Alfred Hackett.	1959	Geoffrey Ferrier.
1912	George Barding.	1959	Tony Robinson
1917	Horace Crowther.	1960	Jack McCleary.
1920	Tom Wareham	1963	Murray Shapter.
1922	William Dunk.	1964	William Nelson
1926	Norman Hunt	1966	Ned Stonehouse.
1930	T. Mouchemore.	1973	Bill Huggins.
		1973	Peter Lewry.
		1974	Ken Burgess.
		1975	Ian Fitzsimmons.

All invited to the centenary picnic

A family BYO picnic to celebrate the centenary of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse will be held on Saturday 23rd March at 12 noon at the lighthouse. An official re-dedication ceremony will be held at 1.30pm. The Mayor of the Borough of Queenscliffe Cr Val Lawrence will conduct the ceremony and guest speaker Mary Hartley from the Victorian Channels Authority will unveil a commemorative plaque.

During the centenary week the Queenscliffe Historical Society and the Queenscliffe Maritime Museum will open special exhibitions as part of the celebrations.

From 12th March the Point Lonsdale Post Office will issue a commemorative Australia Post Franking to mark the centenary of the lighthouse.

Lighthouse families and their descendants are warmly invited to the picnic and celebration.

The celebrations have been arranged with the assistance of the following organisations: Borough of Queenscliffe, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victorian Channels Authority, Missions to Seafarers, Anglican and Uniting Churches of Point Lonsdale and the Queenscliffe Maritime and Historical Museums.

*Best wishes to the
Point Lonsdale Lighthouse on
100 years of service*

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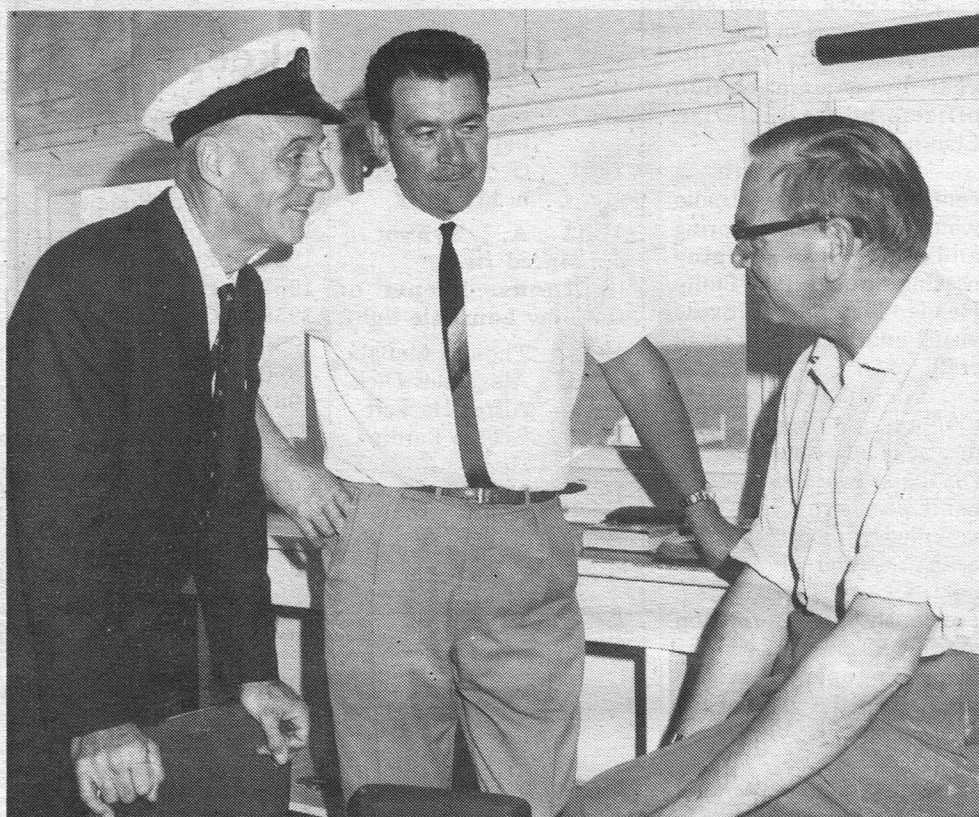
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the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse
a happy 100th anniversary



On 4th January 1968, Alec Rose (left) met Mr Roddick (centre) and assistant keeper Don Garnham in the signal station at Point Lonsdale lighthouse.

Point Lonsdale lighthouse keeper awarded British Empire Medal

IN the 1969 Queen's Birthday Honours list, Point Lonsdale head lighthouse keeper Grenville (Rod) Roddick was awarded the British Empire

Medal (BEM) for services to the Maritime industry and the Queenscliffe Lifeboat service. He joined the lighthouse service, then run by the Public Works Department in 1946 as an assistant lighthouse keeper and was promoted to head keeper in 1966. He also became superintendent of the lifeboat in the same year.

Mr Roddick was on duty at the Point Lonsdale signal station when the ship *Wangara* went aground in The Rip in 1961, and similarly when the ships *Beltana* and *Karoon* went aground in 1963.

In December 1967 he was involved as the lighthouse head keeper with the sea search after Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt disappeared in the surf off Portsea back beach.

On the same day in 1967, around-the-world yachtsman Alec Rose sailed into Port Phillip Bay and thought all the small craft, police boats and aircraft involved in the search for the Prime Minister had turned out to greet him. In January 1968, Alec Rose went to Point Lonsdale to meet the duty lighthouse keepers at the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse.

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Photo A. Jensen

Happy 100th Birthday from everyone at Terminus House

The owners of Terminus House would like to welcome their new management team Tyrone and Julie.

Terminus House circa 1884 has had a long association with the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse. The original lighthouse keeper purchased Terminus House as a home for his large family. Terminus House today is the only original guest house in Point Lonsdale still in operation. We offer old world style bed and breakfast rooms in the original building as well as modern accommodation for families in the recently renovated rear section of the property. Inspections welcome.

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MY love affair with the lighthouse began in the 1960s when I started photographing her with my mum's box brownie and further creative attempts were made in the 1970s and 80s. The 1990s produced many new angles, moon rises and foregrounds of natural flora, touched with beautiful dawn and sunset light.

I took a new tack 'Brushed with Light' and a new series began. Mood evoking time exposures using ebb and flood tide lights, creating surreal images with available

light.

I have watched in awe from beyond the waves as she changes colour at the end of the day, surfaced from the shipwreck seabed on the outer reef to find her standing silent guarding over me.

I've painted her three coats bottom to top, so she could shine out to sea. Left the heads for six day fishing trips to watch her disappear and to feel the joy on return as she stands tall on the headland shining light, greets and guides me home

safely.

I remember the joy of many years from my bedroom window I would watch, head on the pillow, say goodnight to the lighthouse.

To awaken to the wind-dowpane rattling, it must be foggy out to sea. There she blows again; it's the foghorn sending deep, resonant shivers right through me.

Happy birthday Lonsdale Light you are a worthy title owner to me.

-Rodney Nicholson

IN her book the *History of Point Lonsdale*, Mrs N. A. Dunn wrote in 1948 of the Lighthouse:

"At sunset on that memorable day in March 1902, a light sped to the heart of the cavernous blackness that overhung the Strait. Seventeen miles that brave beam travelled and the red

light, eight. There began a rhythm which has come with every sunset since, as inevitable as if it were a phenomenon of nature: Flash two, eclipse, two; flash two, eclipse, nine.

How often have we children stood outside in the pale glow that streamed down the passage, from the dining room and counted, to

the quick ins and outs of that brisk, tireless light, whose beam was almost swallowed in the woolly blackness of the intervening teatree.

...Now with this new and powerful guardian of the storm tossed, there was no more excuse for wasted cargo and wasted lives".

- N. A. Dunn



Point Lonsdale Lighthouse at dawn by Rev Geoff Traill, St James Anglican Church.

The Queenscliffe Herald acknowledges the assistance and resources and volunteers of the Queenscliffe Historical Museum, Queenscliffe Maritime Museum, Norma Roddick, Les Irving-Dusting, Rodney Nicholson and Jocelyn Grant in the preparation of this special feature commemorating 100 years of continuous operation of the Point Lonsdale lighthouse.

Point Lonsdale Newsagency are proud to be involved with the 100 year celebration of the lighthouse. Congratulations.



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